

Bob Marley

By Ken Thomas

In recent years, no other Jamaican artist has given more exposure to the music of Jamaica than Bob Marley. He has sold 20 million records estimated at some \$190 million at home and abroad, especially in Europe.

His live performances amounted to musical phenomena.

We remember his last performance at Maple Leaf Gardens some two years ago. The crowd was mostly white. Everyone came to their feet clapping hands and chanting as he proclaimed in song: "Get up, Stand up. Stand up for your Rights."

Such was the dynamism of the man, Bob Marley. It will be said for many years to come that this reggae master charmed the world with a magic that was unique.

His music brought hope to the forsaken and comfort to the oppressed. He sang the music of life.

When death came to Marley in Miami this week, reports say, he seemed to be in a state of relief.

Peter Tosh, one of the original Wailers, in paying tribute to his great friend, said Rastafarians didn't believe in death.

"Death is not pain," he stated, "Bob's death is a spiritual guidance to those who are left."

None of Marley's albums could be regarded as failures. They were all good sellers.

Island Records, the British-based company with which he recorded, did extremely well with *Catch a Fire*, *Rastaman Vibration*, *Babylon by Bus*, *Survival* and other releases.

The profits achieved by the singer made Island a champion in the record industry.

Marley himself lived well but how much of his earnings were channelled into charitable or grassroot activity is not exactly known.

The Reggae superman has been able over the years to win the confidence and support of several confidants.

One such person is his manager, Don Taylor. It was Taylor who faced the rain of bullets in 1976 when an attempt was made in Jamaica to assassinate the great singer.

In the process, Marley was saved, but he was hit by two bullets. Taylor was shot five times and Marley's wife, Rita, was also hit. A local reporter was amazed that during that attack no one was killed, since so many shots had been fired.

His concern for the poor and suffering preoccupied the lyrical artistry of Bob Marley. Even when he was not singing, his conversation revolved in the same sphere.

He once told an interviewer: "We want our people to live like they want to live."

The fact that Bob Marley has been honored by the Government and people of Jamaica seems rather appropriate for a man who has done so much for his native culture and his people.

That motion put before the Jamaican Parliament to confer on him the prestigious Order of Merit was tabled by Opposition M.P., Anthony Spaulding.

One recalls his precise words before the House; "Marley's theme of social justice primarily focussed on the poor and suffering internationally. Through his music he single-handedly waged a struggle against oppressive institutions and insensitive leadership.

"To the people who listened to Marley's music," Mr. Spaulding continued, "he was either a revolutionary, or he was analyzing human conditions and making presentations on how to make them better."

Bob Marley was indeed a prophet of change whose words and music will live on .



BOB MARLEY



"UNITY IS STRENGTH" — Reggae Superstar Bob Marley [centre] getting the two leaders to shake hands, former Prime Minister Michael Manley [left] and the then Opposition Leader Edward Seaga during his performance on the One Love Peace Concert at the National Stadium in 1978.